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HE FRUITS F OUR USSIAN ALLIANCE

By H. N. BRAILSFORD

LONDON:
THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN COMMITTEE
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THE FRUITS OF OUR RUSSIAN ALLIANCE

BY

H. N. BRAILSFORD

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THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN COMMITTEE

56 Lincoln's Inn Fields, W.C.

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Sir or Madam,

The Anglo-Russian Committee, one of whose first publications is enclosed for your consideration, has been formed with the object of circulating information that will enable the British reader to judge of the true character and results of the alliance which—without any sort of demand from people or parliament—the Foreign Office has made with the Tsar's Government. Such information, whether it relate to the frightful wrongs suffered by the Russian people at the hands of its rulers, the responsibility of all who lend money to the Russian State for those wrongs, the corruption of British policy by this partnership, or the injuries it inflicts on other peoples, does not make pleasant reading, and few of our newspapers are any longer willing to print it. The Government deprecates any discussion of the subject; and a network of financial interests is being rapidly woven wherein the conscience of England and the memory of her traditional friendship for nations "rightly struggling to be free" may presently be strangled.

We ask you to help us to struggle against such a moral disaster. Scrupulous care will be taken that any statement issued by the Committee shall be based upon well-authenticated facts. All its directing work is done gratuitously; it will co-operate wherever possible with kindred bodies; and its supporters may be assured that contributions entrusted to it will be used effectively and economically. It is hoped that you may be able to send some subscription, however small, for the purpose indicated, and to aid us also by making the aim of the Committee more widely known.

Faithfully yours,

(Mrs.) H. MATHESON,

Hon. Secretary.

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The Fruits of our Russian Alliance

By H. N. Brailsford

"We ordinary mortals," remarked Lord Rosebery the other day, "are not admitted behind the scenes . . . but one thing we do know about our foreign policy: for good or for evil we are embraced in the midst of the Continental system." Those "liabilities" of which he spoke may never, in fact, involve us in the Armageddon which he foresees. The sanity of nations, when once a peril is perceived, refuses to follow the logic of their fatal impetus. But even if we knew that no European sea would ever again be stained with blood and no frontier violated by an invading army, the consequences of our alliance with the Russian autocracy would remain. We made an understanding with a staggering chaos. Our friendship restored its credit, raised its prestige, and

gave it the confidence and the security which have enabled it to become once more an aggressive and expanding Empire.

There is little mystery about the motives which have guided our policy. Our entry into the Continental system meant in plain words that we had become the ally of France, and that we regarded Germany as our rival, if not our enemy. To-day we are all asking ourselves whether any real conflict of interest or even of sentiment divides us or ever has divided us. In all the quarrels which from 1905 to 1911 conducted us twice or thrice to the verge of war, we were defending no territory and no aspiration of our own. We had become leaders in a feud of partisan groups, in which each sought for a preponderant voice in the counsels of Europe, by marshalling allies and confederates on his side. Germany, we thought, had become dangerously powerful because Russia had suffered eclipse in her Far Eastern War, and in the revolutionary period which followed it. It became, therefore, one of the prime objects of our policy to restore Russia to her rank as a Great Power, in the hope that her influence would be ranged steadily on our side. To-day we all begin to perceive that it might be simpler after

all to reach an understanding with Germany, instead of attempting to encircle her with a hostile coalition. Russia has proved herself a less reliable and a less amenable partner than we expected. But in one particular Sir Edward Grey's policy has undoubtedly succeeded. "Russia is herself again," as a reactionary organ in St. Petersburg remarked, when within a single month she occupied the North of Persia and declared herself the protector of Mongolia. The sick man is eating heartily once more, and after a long period of fever and abstinence has returned to his accustomed diet. To swallow two little nations in as many weeks is certainly to be a Great Power.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF FINANCE

The consequences of our close partnership with Russia are apparent and undeniable in Persia. No candid man will deny that it was because we wished to buy the alliance of Russia against Germany that we have allowed her to destroy the independence of Persia. Less obvious, but even more sinister, has been the effect of the growing cordiality between the governing classes in England

and the rulers of Russia upon the popular struggle for freedom. It is not easy for us, a self-sufficing and very insular people, whose foible is a certain disdain for foreign opinion, to realise how important the attitude of the rest of Europe is to Russia. The reason is partly sentimental and partly financial. To be recognised as a civilised government means to the Tsardom hardly less than his recognition as a crowned head meant to the *parvenu* Napoleon. Despite the genius of its people and its triumphs in literature and music, the civilisation of Russia is recent, and its Government is sensitive to the tendency of Western Europe to class it as semi-barbarous and partly Asiatic. But the main reason of this sensitiveness is that Russia depends as absolutely as any Latin American Republic upon its repute in Western money markets. It must float by far the greater part of its loans abroad. It cannot even provide from its own resources for the municipal enterprises of its cities. Its undeveloped coal and iron and petroleum fields all await the fertilisation of foreign capital. If we can conceive for a moment what German opinion would mean for us, if we had to float consols through a German bank, if Manchester had to go to Berlin for money to build

her tramways, if a South Wales Coalmine were awaiting the good opinion of some financier in Hamburg, we shall be able to realise dimly why and how much the good opinion of the English people matters to the Russian Government. Credit is a delicate possession. It is made not merely by the conclusion of a banker in the City that a given investment is sound. The banker is at the mercy of the little investor up and down the country —the timid maiden lady with a precarious competence, the retired professional man whose power of earning is exhausted, the little shopkeeper with a savings bank account. So long as these people thought of Russia either as a hostile Empire dangerous to ourselves, or as an unstable autocracy menaced by revolution, it was in vain that the Russian financier brought his proposals to the City. Prudence, patriotism and humanity were all against him. But so soon as Russia became an ally and confederate, when King Edward went to Reval and the Tsar came to the Isle of Wight, when all the newspapers which circulate among the moneyed classes conspired to represent her as a Liberal and Constitutional Power steadily advancing towards order and freedom, then, at last, the purse-strings of the British investor were

untied. It will be the object of this pamphlet to show that in fact the internal condition of Russia has no whit improved. It is considerations of high policy which have caused our press, our politicians, and our governing class to enter on a conspiracy of silence and eulogy. They wanted Russia's aid against Germany. That is why the old habit of truth-telling gave way to the present flatteries. It is easy to measure the change. In January, 1906, a great non-party demonstration was held at the Queen's Hall against the excesses of the bureaucracy. Lord Milner was one of the speakers, and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain sent a letter. In January, 1912, a non-party " deputation " went from Members of Parliament, the Anglican Church, and high finance to tender their homage to the Tsar, to consult with Russian financiers, and to pay their respects to the Holy Synod. Between these two dates lie such events as the destruction of two Dumas, the ruin of Finnish autonomy, and the end of Persian independence.

France has passed through a parallel experience. She allied herself with the Russian autocracy chiefly because she also feared a German attack; she could, at least, plead a show of necessity, as we cannot. She found that what Russia

chiefly wanted was free access to her Bourse. Year by year the indebtedness of Russia increased. Loan after loan was floated, until at length economists began to ask whether Russia was not paying the interest on her old loans with the principal of her new borrowings. Industrial investments followed the State loans, until every banker and every little investor in France felt himself the creditor of Tsardom. Russia began to enjoy the security of the reckless debtor. She could always ask for more, because if more were refused, France might lose all that she had embarked. The press reflected this enslavement, until at length none but the Socialist newspapers dared to hint that anything was amiss with the government of Russia. But after the Japanese War a limit seemed to have been reached. The banks with the Government behind them refused to assume the sole responsibility for floating another Russian loan. It was here that our responsibility began. After Paris, London is the world's money market. There is no other centre which could have floated such a loan as Russia required. The moment was opportune. Lord Lansdowne when he left office in 1905 had already begun the negotiations which were to end in the Anglo-Russian Treaty

of 1907. Sir Edward Grey pursued them with enthusiasm, and by the spring of 1906 the alliance was virtually concluded. But in Russia the fortunes of the Constitutional movement were in the balance. A sort of Constitution had been extorted from the Tsar by the general strike in October, 1905. The elections for the new Duma were already being held in an atmosphere of tension. The repression was in some provinces at its worst, yet the people was resolute and hopeful. Everyone knew that the new Duma would have to struggle for its rights against a reactionary ministry and a court which already repented its concessions. What weapon could it wield ? If it could have met a discredited Government with a bankrupt treasury, it might, with European opinion behind it, have defied the Tsardom. History would have moved on very different lines. The Liberals and the Socialists, fresh from their sweeping victory at the polls, could have said to the Tsar's Ministers : " We have Russia behind us and we have Europe behind us. Your coffers are empty ; your credit is exhausted. Concede our full right of responsible government and we will vote your taxes and sanction your loan. Deny our rights, and we can answer for

it that neither in London nor in Paris will you find the money to finance your oppressions." But in March, 1906, the great loan had been floated in London and Paris, and in May, when the Duma assembled, it found itself confronted by a Government whose needs were satisfied, and whose war-chest was full. In all the years from 1854 to 1906 no Russian loan had been floated in London. The hostility which began with the Crimean war had closed our money market to the Tsars. We opened it three months too soon. Had we waited, as the Russian Liberal press implored us to wait, we should have armed the Constitutional movement with a weapon of coercion which would have enabled it to dictate its own terms. The Cossack can do little unless the financier stands behind him. But no Parliament can effectively wield the traditional weapon of supply, if foreign banks have first provided for the despot's needs.

The treason which began in March, 1906, has since become a habit and a policy. The Foreign Office and the *Times*, which might with a nod have checked the operations of the City then, have steadily engaged in a scheme for fostering the export of British capital to Russia. What dimensions it has reached

to-day not even an expert could confidently estimate. But even a layman, who glances at the advertisements in the Russian Supplement of the *Times*, must be impressed with its growing importance. One firm alone boasts that between November, 1909, and October, 1911, it has placed Russian bonds worth £4,891,700 on the English market. The city of Baku, in these two years, has borrowed £1,300,000 in London, and many of the other large towns have followed its example. We are rapidly emulating the French precedent, and are paying for our "understanding" as she paid for her "alliance." There is now in England, as there was not in 1906, a force of self-interest which makes for the conservation of the *status quo* in Russia, and serves as a buttress to things as they are. If the Russian people, incensed by the tyranny of the secret police, and indignant at the electoral system which renders the Duma a nullity, were once more to attempt to repeat its successes of 1905, and to extort, by a general strike or by armed rebellion, a real constitution from the Tsar, the City and the *Times* would watch with alarm the values of its Russian stocks sinking daily in the lists. The resources of newspaper comment

would be used to back the bureaucracy in its resistance to the people, and if a second appeal were made to fill its war-chest with a State loan floated in London, the City would subscribe it, not merely because it hoped for profit, but still more because it wished to save itself from loss. Our diplomatic entanglements and our financial commitments have given our governing class a stake in the government of Russia. A renewal of the Revolutionary period would mean of necessity the eclipse once more of Russian influence in the counsels of Europe, and a check to the remunerative dealings in which the City is concerned. There is some reason to believe that after five years of repression and discouragement the spirit of the parties of revolt is once more reviving. It is also obvious that one of the worst of the periodical famines to which the Russian peasantry is subject will presently compel the Government to float yet another foreign loan. The "deputation" of financiers, obscure Members of Parliament and Anglican prelates, which went this January to Russia, was probably intended to raise the temperature to the point at which money flows. It is opportune to ask ourselves what sort of administration it is which British

countenance and support has helped to conserve. A British loan served to disarm the Duma in 1906. It rests with public opinion to say whether fresh assistance shall give the reaction a new lease of life in 1912.

THE THREE DUMAS

It is unnecessary to recall in any detail the main facts of Russian history during the period covered by the British understanding. The first Duma, elected though it was at a time of violent repression and on a franchise designed to thwart the popular will, showed an overwhelming majority for the progressive parties, and was dominated by the Liberal "Constitutional Democrats," commonly called "Cadets." They claimed the right of every free Parliament to demand a Ministry in harmony with the views of the majority. They also proposed to deal with the grievances of the peasantry by a great scheme of compulsory land purchase. The first Duma was dissolved after less than three months of life, and for the rest of the year M. Stolypin ruled without a Parliament. Field courts-martial terrorised the country, and hanged Socialist agitators on an average of something like

three a day. Worse even than this, in its permanent consequences, was the Land Act which he promulgated by an autocratic decree. It aimed at destroying the peasant communes which had from time immemorial held the land on a system of collective tenure, substituted individual ownership, and while creating a class of peasant owners who are speedily falling into the hands of usurers, added yet greater numbers to the landless proletariat. "The Duma is dead—Long live the Duma" was Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's comment on the *coup d'état.* A second Duma did, indeed, meet in 1907, and proved to be still more radical than the first. M. Stolypin apparently regarded it in the spirit of the monarch who wished that the people had one head that he might cut it off. The most powerful and resolute party in it were the Social Democrats. Against them he trumped up a charge of conspiring to make a military insurrection. It was necessary, if he meant to preserve the letter of the Constitution, that he should obtain the consent of the Duma before he could arrest any of its members, and accordingly a commission, chosen from all parties, sat to examine his evidence. One must remember that the Socialists were not at this time popular

with the Constitutional Liberals (Cadets) —whose timidity they used to denounce —and still less with the Constitutional Conservatives (Octobrists). None the less, M. Teslenko, the reporter of this Commission, told the present Duma, in a public speech, that it came unanimously to the conclusion that the Socialist deputies were innocent :—

> "The Commission of which I was the reporter, arrived at the unanimous conclusion that there was a conspiracy, but not of the Socialist Deputies against the existing *regime*, but of the *Okhrana* (Secret Police) against the Second Duma. The report of the Commission in that sense was ready to be read at the tribune, when the Second Duma was brusquely dissolved : the Commission was prevented from revealing the truth."

There can be little doubt that this wildly improbable charge of conspiracy was brought forward against the party in the Duma which had shown itself the most vigorous and uncompromising in debate, expressly in order to make a pretext for its dissolution. The *coup d'état* put an end to the immunity of these deputies from arrest, and 35 of them were seized and tried in secret before a special tribunal. The Russian

Social Democrats are, in point of fact, as little likely to play with such a childish plot as are their comrades of the German Reichstag. The police spy on whose deposition they were condemned left the secret service some little while later, and confessed his part in fabricating the false evidence against them. Seventeen of these men, the bravest and the ablest leaders of the Russian working class, were sentenced to four or five years hard labour, which will be followed by exile in Siberia, and ten more to perpetual deportation in Siberia. Two of these deputies have died in prison; one has lost his reason and is in a mad-house; a fourth, the brilliant orator Tseretelli, contracted consumption in prison, and is said to be now at death's door. They have been treated as common criminals, nor were they even spared the wearing of fetters and the degradation of the lash.

With the dissolution of the Second Duma, the experiment of electing a Russian Parliament on a relatively democratic franchise came to an end. Experience had shown that mere repression and police terrorism, instead of inducing the masses to vote for reactionary candidates, only served to improve the chances of the extremer parties at the polls. M. Stolypin

accordingly, by an exercise of autocratic authority, revised the electoral law, and devised a franchise which at length gave him a comparatively docile Duma. By an ingenious system of indirect election, the few hundreds of thousands of landed gentry were given a power which outweighed the millions of peasant voters, and outside the towns it was practically impossible even for a Liberal to secure election. The dominant party in the Third Duma, which has sat since 1908, is that of the Octobrists, who profess a mild form of Constitutional Conservatism, but their tendency has been to ally themselves rather with the pronounced reactionaries than with the Liberal "Cadets." By an almost unbroken servility and docility the Third Duma has saved itself from a premature dissolution, but no more positive achievement stands to its credit. It has allowed itself to be flouted by Ministers who have often refused to appear before it to answer interpellations. It has made no use whatever of the nominal powers it possesses over finance to extort concessions by refusing supplies. The worst of its actual treasons to liberty has been the passage of the Act which destroys Finnish autonomy. In constructive legislation it has been content to pass a few humdrum

Bills of doubtful value dealing with local government and education. The Government, in short, has done no better because a Duma existed, and could have done no worse if the Duma had been suppressed. The utmost that can be said in its favour is that it has furnished a free platform in a country where free speech is elsewhere repressed. Some grievances have been eloquently expressed in its debates, but the value of this particular boon may easily be exaggerated. The Liberal orators have only made phrases about a discontent which tens of thousands of Russians have expiated at the gallows and in the gaols.

There is one test which may fairly be applied to this artificially Conservative Duma. It ought to have stood at the lowest for some programme of personal liberties. Here in theory the Octobrists are at one with the Cadets. But in this field its record is negative and barren. Russia lies under the same system of arbitrary police despotism which oppressed it when the Constitution was promised in 1905. A map would show vast regions under one form or another of martial law—"state of siege" or "reinforced protection"—phrases which indicate the suspension of all the nominal guarantees of civil liberty. What is

virtually military government persists as the normal rule, though it is three or four years since any organised revolutionary movement existed. The police retain the right of banishment without trial by administrative order, and even where suspects are tried for political offences it is commonly with closed doors. The right of meeting is non-existent. The right of association is so little respected that this year, as in the past, philanthropic societies have been forbidden to continue their efforts for the relief of the famine. The Press maintains a precarious existence under a rain of fines and a steady discipline of imprisonment. Worst of all, the *Okhrana* or Secret Police, wields in the name of the Tsar an inscrutable and irresponsible power which has induced even Conservative orators to compare it in the Duma to the "Mafia" or "Black Hand." It makes crime and manufactures evidence. It incites genuine revolutionaries to terrorism, and conducts a species of terrorism of its own. The almost incredible romance of crime which centres round the name of Azeff is too well known to need recapitulation. This man, a trusted agent of the secret police, actually became the head of the militant revolutionary organisation, and planned a whole

series of assassinations including those of Plehve and the Grand Duke Sergius. He must have acted on behalf of one clique in the secret police organisation which made war with the terrorists as its unconscious tool, against a rival official clique. Yet when this man was unmasked by an honest police-official, Lopukhin, Azeff was protected by M. Stolypin, while Lopukhin was sent to Siberia. Nemesis came last September; M. Stolypin, who had not dared to destroy this secret society which masquerades as a police, was himself shot by one of its hirelings. These are its more dramatic escapades. Its plots against the lives and liberties and reputations of obscurer citizens go almost uncounted. Its most commonplace achievement is to tempt some ardent youth in his teens or early twenties to a clandestine meeting of Socialist students. A compromising document is secreted in his lodgings, and presently there is a gap in the family circle, and a life is being broken on the road to Siberia.

IN THE PRISONS

The reader who would form some conception of what life has meant in Russia during recent years for those of its

citizens who had the courage to work for liberty will find in Prince Kropotkin's pamphlet ("The Terror in Russia," Methuen, 1909), a full and dispassionate record of M. Stolypin's methods of repression, compiled by a man whose name is a guarantee at once for honesty and for accurate scientific statement. He shows how the population of Russia's prisons rose during the period of nominal liberty from a daily average of 85,000 in 1905, to 181,000 in 1909. He describes the overcrowding with its inevitable consequence that gaol-fever (typhus), and scurvy, ravaged the insanitary prisons. He cites indisputable evidence, collected in some cases by the Duma itself, of the use of tortures worthy of the Inquisition. He enumerates 160 recent cases in which prisoners committed suicide to escape torture, ill-treatment, or outrage. Official figures showed that in 1909 the courts martial were hanging men and women, without a civil trial, at the rate of almost three persons daily. The number of political exiles quartered in remote villages of Northern Russia and Siberia stood at this date, by official admission, at 74,000. It is harder to-day than ever it was to obtain reliable facts about the condition of the Russian prisons, but there is evidence enough to

show that there has been no improvement since Prince Kropotkin compiled his indictment.

It is only occasionally that some scandal in these prisons becomes so notorious that the facts are brought to light in a Duma debate. Towards the end of 1909 some two hundred political prisoners at Vologda resorted to a hunger strike in protest against the systematic flogging to which they were subjected. An epidemic of suicides among the political prisoners at Sarentuy (Eastern Siberia) resulted in an enquiry which showed that they were kept in a state of semi-starvation and brutally flogged. (December, 1910.) The next prison which became the subject of a public enquiry was Nikolaevsk. Here one of the Socialist Deputies of the Second Duma gave evidence that he had been flogged on the day of his arrival until he fainted, and when later he dared to ask the reason for this treatment he was beaten again until his collar-bone was broken. Yet he was only one of thirty political prisoners in this one prison who had been treated no less brutally.

The latest instance of brutality, gross enough to attract attention even in Russia, occurred in the prison of Pskov. The facts were investigated by Korolenko,

one of the foremost of living novelists, and the editor of the ablest of the Russian reviews. His conclusions have been published (December 31st, 1911) in the Liberal newspaper *Retch*, with the approval of Professor Miliukoff, the leader of the Liberal (Cadet) party. The politicals in this prison were systematically ill-treated, kept without sufficient food and clothing, and daily subjected to corporal punishment. Korolenko estimated that 130 prisoners had received among them some 5,625 strokes with the lash. The reasons given were (for example) failure to salute in proper military fashion, or having letters and newspapers in their possession. The Director of Prisons visited Pskov, heard the prisoners' complaints and told them in a mocking voice "to forgive and forget." Their torments increased after his inspection to such a point that 105 of them declared a hunger strike. On the third day they were flogged, starving, and some of them (it is not certainly known how many) succumbed; one, at least, of them committed suicide. The official report on the condition of the Pskov prison eulogises its officers and pronounces its condition exemplary, but it none the less admits that corporal punishment was inflicted wholesale, and

that the politicals were in such despair that they maintained their hunger-strike of protest for four days. A heart-rending letter from a prisoner at Orel, which had somehow been smuggled out, was published in November, 1911, by Maxim Gorky, who knew the writer and vouched for his truthfulness. He spoke of systematic and periodical floggings, inflicted apparently with the sole object of breaking the spirit and health of the prisoners. Batches of prisoners were flogged as they arrived, until they fell fainting on the stone floor and wakened to find themselves surrounded by the nearly naked bodies of groaning men. He names four of his comrades who died under this treatment, and adds that "one batch of 40 political prisoners was so handled that 14 died." These abominations do not pass without protest. General Mischenko, one of the few soldiers who emerged with credit from the Manchurian war, wrote in an official report on the prisons in the Don province which he now governs :—

> "Political prisoners are punished in an exceedingly severe way, because they cannot carry out the regulations of a discipline which really is unbearable and was specially instituted for them."

To appreciate the meaning of these brutalities two facts must be kept in mind. These " politicals " are not reckless terrorists or assassins. Men guilty of overt acts of revolt perished promptly on the gallows among the 3,431 persons who were executed by court-martial from the beginning of 1906 to September, 1911. The offences of most of these prisoners are acts which in any other country would be legal. They are expiating the crime of belonging to the Social Democratic Party, or of secretly printing a Labour manifesto on May-Day, or of circulating a Socialist pamphlet. In the second place such barbarities as these are a new fact in Russian life. Political suspects and offenders were always punished, with or without trial, by harsh imprisonment and exile under conditions of extreme privation. But it is only in quite recent years that the intolerable aggravation of corporal chastisement has been added to their sufferings. When we are assured by the advocates of the alliance that Russia is a Liberal Power with a free Parliament, it is well to remember that thirty of the Deputies whom it did elect when it was free to choose its representatives, are still lingering in its overcrowded prisons, condemned on a charge which all parties

pronounced to be false, and subject there to a barbaric discipline which dares even to use the lash.

THE PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS

The progress of any European society towards civilisation may be measured infallibly by its treatment of its Jews. To the Dark Ages belong the periods of massacre and forced conversion. Enlightenment begins when we can record of any Christian country that of its own free will it has admitted their rights as human beings and citizens. Tested by this standard Russia has actually retrogressed during the period of the English understanding. It is true that the stage of sheer barbaric massacre came to an end in 1906. The organised slaughter of Jews, which was carried out by the "Black Hundreds" throughout the year 1905, and in some isolated cases even after the First Duma met in 1906, has not since been renewed. The facts were too scandalous. All Europe knew that the Tsar had accepted the post of patron to this party of political vivisectors, that he was the honorary chief of the "Union of truly Russian Men," that their proclamations inciting to massacre had been printed in the Ministry of the Interior,

that the secret political police had everywhere seconded their work, that Grand Dukes were among their subscribers, and that the Tsar had publicly thanked the troops which joined in the last of these *pogroms*. To public opinion even the Russian autocracy must bow when it seeks access to the European money-market. The indignation excited by the last of the massacres in May, 1906, was the main reason of the success of the protest of the English Liberal press against the proposed visit of the British Fleet to Cronstadt. The cancelling of that visit was a warning which the Court could not ignore. *Pogroms* from this day onward were discarded as a method of persecution too notorious, too mediæval, and too risky. A more artistic form of torture has taken their place, and the Jews have experienced instead a sort of dry terrorism, a bloodless persecution by legal and economic methods. In 1906, despite the horror of these killings, there were signs of progress, for the Government was promising legislation to remove the disabilities of the Jews. Nothing is heard of this legislation to-day. In its place there issue from the Ministries a steady series of regulations and decrees which have added to an already intolerable burden, and by their steady pressure

rendered the plight of the Jews worse then it was even in the years when the streets of the Ghetto ran with blood.

In the Middle Ages every big town had its Ghetto to which the Jews were confined. In Russia the whole Eastern region along the Polish frontier is one vast Ghetto. In the market towns of these Eastern provinces and in them alone are the Jews free to reside. Elsewhere, even in the capital and in Moscow, it is only certain privileged classes of Jews who are tolerated at all, under a system of restrictive taxation and surveillance which makes them as it were ticket-of-leave men among their Christian neighbours. Even in the Jewish Pale they are subject to disabilities which recall the condition of the Irish Catholics under the Penal Laws. They may not own land, and, therefore, they are excluded from agriculture. Penned together in towns from which they may not remove, they are exposed to the continual rack-renting of Christian landlords, who may exact what toll they please for permission to reside and trade. A place classed as a "market-town" may at any moment cease to rank as such by an arbitrary decree, and when this happens its Jews are expelled. Some families of long standing had acquired a prescriptive

right to reside in the smaller villages of the Pale. They can retain it to-day, if they do retain it at all, only by bribing the police. With the cessation of *pogroms* expulsions have become more frequent and systematic. As many as 1,200 Jewish families were expelled from the city of Kieff alone in consequence of a regulation issued in 1909. Still more recently the Governor of Nijni-Novgorod told the Rabbi that he would in future expel fifty Jews for every " offensive " article published in the Liberal organ *Retch*.

Outside the Pale certain privileged classes of Jews may reside by a very precarious tenure and in practice by the permission of the police. Artisans are nominally free, it they can acquire certain certificates, and if they sell only goods made by themselves; but if, for example, a watchmaker who makes watches should sell a chain he would be liable to expulsion. Men of a certain grade of education are free to leave the Pale, and merchants who pay a tax of £80 a year for the privilege of admission to the First Guild. But once outside the Pale the struggle for existence is hardly less severe than within it. The tax of £80 may be a full half of the trader's income. The Civil Service in all its branches, is closed to a Jew, who may not become a

postman, a railway servant or engineer, or even a schoolmaster. Jewish doctors may not serve in municipal hospitals, and in practice a Jew can hardly now be called to the Bar. Children of parents who have acquired the right to reside outside the Pale do not inherit it. At twenty-one they may be driven from their native town. There are well-authenticated cases which tell of the humiliations which these laws impose. Women students at Moscow have been forced to take out a licence as prostitutes in order to acquire the right to reside in the University town, and a well-known poet lived for some years in St. Petersburg nominally as the valet of a Jewish merchant who had the right to reside and to employ Jewish servants.

To explain in detail all the restrictions which have been aggravated since 1906 would carry us too far into a labyrinth of technicalities. They affect the right of Jews to reside, to trade, and to share in limited companies. One simple illustration will suffice to reveal the spirit of the reaction. In August, 1908, the Ministry issued a decree, which it did not submit to the Duma, restricting the right of Jewish children to education. Within the Pale some six millions of Jews are crowded, and in many of its towns they form the majority of the population.

Yet a primary school may enrol only 10 per cent. of Jewish children among its pupils, and a secondary school only 15 per cent. To harry the Jews who have settled outside the Ghetto, to aggravate the over-crowding, the competition and the exploitation within it, to deny knowledge and to close the avenues through which knowledge led to freedom, such has been the policy of the Russian Government during the period of its intimacy with a British Liberal administration.

FINLAND

A volume might be written to describe the various forms of petty persecution which the Russian Government has practised at the expense of all the non-Russian nationalities of a composite Empire during the past six years. Poland, the Baltic Provinces, Finland, and Georgia, each has its dismal history of enforced Russification and repression. The Poles, despite their genius, have never known free government; the Georgians are a splendid primitive race which has only recently acquired European culture. The tragedy of Finland, on the other hand, is that it is by race, by religion, by culture, and by its

political traditions an integral part of free Europe. An Empire given over to reaction is destroying an object-lesson of liberty which stood too legible at its doors. A half Asiatic monarchy is invading, with its corruptions and its brutalities, a little corner of our Western fatherland. Lutheran in religion, with an ancient representative Constitution, Finland had been a province of Sweden until amid the turmoil of the Napoleonic wars it came in 1809 under the Russian crown. Alexander I. was a man of romantic temperament and of liberal sympathies. When he became Grand Duke of Finland, he swore that he and his heirs would observe her constitution, would consider her "free as regards her internal affairs," and "from henceforth placed in the rank of nations." Finland developed, in the last generation, a system of education which entitled its people to rank with the most enlightened races of Europe. In 1899, however, under the present Tsar, the period of Russification began, and by 1903 the infamous General Bobrikoff, ruling with dictatorial powers, had destroyed all that was left of Finnish liberties. The Japanese war and the Russian revolutionary period heralded a brief era of happiness. Finnish autonomy was

restored at the end of 1905, and, under the stimulus of a new hope, the Finns proceeded to create a new Constitution on a basis of universal suffrage for men and women with proportional representation. For a few years it was, perhaps, the most advanced and the most contented of European countries, eagerly busied with social reform and internal reconstruction.

The concessions granted, while all Russia seethed with revolution, did not long survive the restoration of the autocracy and the defeat of the Russian progressives. The first serious inroad on Finnish autonomy was a demand that the Russian Cabinet should exercise a veto over all Finnish legislation. Hitherto, the Finnish Ministry (Senate) had dealt directly with the Tsar as their Grand Duke. This innovation reduced Finland at one blow to the level of a Russian province, subject to the chiefs of the Russian bureaucracy—for the Russian Ministers are nothing more. The Finnish Constitution was, in effect, swept away by these "Regulations" which were issued in June, 1908, as an item of Russian administrative "legislation" without the sanction either of the Russian Duma or the Finnish Diet. One need not recount in detail

the solemn and constitutional protests of the Finnish Diet. The only answer of the Tsar was to dissolve it. Abroad, the most famous of European jurists, British, French, and German, including Sir Frederick Pollock, Sir Edward Fry, and Professor Westlake, united, in a declaration which had all the authority of a verdict, after a careful examination of all documents and treaties, to the effect that the autonomy of Finland is an obligation contracted by the Tsars, which they are not competent to revoke. Finland, as they put it, " did not enter into the Russian Empire as a conquered province, precariously endowed with temporary privileges, but as an autonomous organism, united by free agreement to a sovereign State, which, on account of this agreement, is obliged to respect this autonomy."

This usurpation was, however, only the beginning of the destruction of Finnish autonomy. The Russian Cabinet delayed, mutilated, or vetoed much Finnish legislation, but the right of the Diet to propose legislation remained intact. In March, 1910, M. Stolypin carried through the Duma and the Council of the Empire a Bill which virtually abolished this right. The relations of a country enjoying Home

Rule with the Empire to which it is linked are never easy to determine. There always are certain common concerns and certain Imperial interests which ought to be safeguarded. The Finns have never opposed on principle an arrangement with this end in view. But M. Stolypin's Bill was a proposal to use this pretext in order to usurp for the Duma—itself a terrorised Chamber resting on a gerrymandered franchise—a vast range of legislation which robbed the Finnish Diet of all the more important concerns which belong to a Parliament, and reduced it almost to the level of a County Council. The Duma was declared competent to deal with taxation for Imperial purposes, with all military questions, the rights of Russian subjects in Finland, with criminal law and procedure, with education, with the right of meeting and association, and the freedom of the press, with coinage, posts, railways and navigation; and—worst of all—this list, already long, could be extended by a simple decree of the Tsar and his officials. It would be hard to say what was left to the Finnish Diet. The main object which one can discern in this ample catalogue was clearly an intention to Russify Finland, and to introduce the

Russian police state, where before there had been national schools, honest Courts, personal liberty, the right of meeting, and a free press. The only compensation offered to Finland for the loss of her autonomy was the right to send four members to enter their protest in the Duma and two to sit in the Council of the Empire. The Finnish Diet with impressive dignity refused to discuss this Russian Bill, and the destruction of their national autonomy was carried by a *coup d'état*.

In its subsequent dealings with Finland the Russian autocracy has followed the same astute policy which has directed its persecution of the Jews. There have been no massacres, no hangings, no dramatic brutalities which might have arrested the attention of European newspapers and stirred the lethargic interest of the civilised world. Its iniquities have been dull and tedious, and they have passed almost unnoticed. But Finland is no longer governed by the Finns. Russian bureaucrats fill the Ministries. Judges and local officials who refuse to become the tools of Russification have resigned or accepted dismissal, and have been replaced by Russians or by Russianised Finns. The Press has been severely persecuted and

meetings and lectures have frequently been prohibited. Arrests in batches and domiciliary searches for political reasons recur periodically. The railways are quietly passing under Russian control. The first steps to Russify the schools and to impose the Russian language have already been taken. It is expected that the Russian State Vodka monopoly will shortly be established in Finland, though the Finns in their brief period of liberty had dealt drastically with drunkenness by prohibiting the sale of alcohol in all country places. Lest this virile race should retain the power of resistance, military service has been abolished and a money contribution levied in its stead. Money voted for education has been assigned to military purposes. Russian garrisons hold the towns, and the soldiers are actually enrolled as Finnish voters. A part of the county of Viborg is about to be separated from Finland and annexed to Russia. It is a slow process of partition and strangulation. Poland has endured it for more than a century. But in Finland the Russian bureaucracy is destroying not merely a nationality, but a community, which was, in its humane and democratic civilisation, a model to Europe.

PERSIA

In the preceding pages we have sketched the internal condition of Russia during the period of the understanding with Great Britain. But it is in the workings of the alliance in Persia that we find its touchstone. The older school of British diplomatists used to say of Russia that she is a Power with whom no intimate relation resting on mutual confidence can be maintained. Experience has shown that this prejudice was only too well founded. There is no Russian Government because there is neither a strong autocrat nor a sovereign people. There is only a weak Tsar surrounded by an intriguing Court, and served by Ministers who are far from constituting a responsible Cabinet. But the interesting consequence of this apparent chaos is that so far from working to the detriment of Russian ambitions, it very powerfully seconds them. There is an ingenious division of labour. One Minister gives pledges, and another breaks them.

To understand the effect which the recent subservience of British diplomacy to Russian policy has had upon the fortunes of Persia we must glance briefly at the condition of the country at the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war

(1904). Russia at this moment maintained the ascendency which she had won while our hands were tied by the Boer war. She was the sole creditor of Persia; she held a species of veto on Persian railway construction; she had imposed a tariff favourable to her trade and detrimental to ours; Russian officers commanded the Shah's body-guard of Persian Cossacks; Belgians, who were by all accounts her agents, controlled her Customs; the heir to the throne had been educated by a Russian tutor; a weak Shah, surrounded by unscrupulous Ministers, had become her creature. Suddenly her defeats in Manchuria shook her prestige to its foundations. There had long been a Liberal movement in Persia, partly theological, partly political, and mainly Nationalist. The Persians are a people of rare intelligence, with an ancient culture and a passion for abstruse speculation. Their decay in the past century was the consequence largely of their subjection to a dynasty which rested for support on the warlike but uncivilised Turco-Tartar tribes of the North-East. The Persians, like the Chinese, had fallen under the sway of tribes incomparably beneath them in their intellectual development. The unrest, when it began, was mainly

a patriotic effort to save what was left of Persian Independence from Russian aggression. The victory of Japan gave it courage; the revolution in Russia turned its thoughts to the demand for a Parliament. By midsummer in 1906 the revolt had taken the form of a sort of national strike against the Shah's government. The bazaars were closed, and, partly as a protest, partly as a precaution, twelve thousand Persians, including most of the educated men of the capital and great numbers of the clergy, sought refuge in the grounds of the British Legation at Teheran. Here the demand for a Constitution and a Parliament had its origin, and when the Shah yielded, it was to British sympathy as much as to their own efforts that the people ascribed their victory. By October, 1906, the first Mejlis (Parliament) had met. It was a victory for liberty even more remarkable than the success of the Young Turkish movement which came two years later. Turkey was much more directly in touch with Europe, and it was by a military conspiracy that she won her Constitution. The Persian people, by their own civilian efforts, gave proof of a passion for freedom and a fitness to enjoy it such as no other Eastern people has shown.

The Persians who, at this period, regarded Great Britain as the foster-parent of their Constitution, knew nothing of the Anglo-Russian Convention which was already in preparation. Their gratitude knew no bounds. They regarded Russia as the ally of the dynasty which they had vanquished, and, because our influence rested on popular sympathy, we had already more than recovered all the ground which we had lost in recent years. It is probable that the first secret and tentative steps towards a Russian understanding were taken by Lord Lansdowne. Early in 1906, under Sir Edward Grey, it was already morally an accomplished fact. It was concluded as a necessary link in his European policy, and apparently, when the whole face of the Persia affair changed mid-way in the negotiations by the resurrection of a Persian nation, it did not occur to him to alter the basis of his arrangements. It was a treaty relating to Persia, but she was neither informed nor consulted while the "conversations" proceeded. Persia was, for both the Powers concerned, a tract of territory, a field for concessions, a market for trade. Neither of them remembered that she is a nation. The Convention began, indeed, with a

"mutual engagement" to "respect her integrity and independence"—the conventional phrases with which predatory Empires invariably salute a country on its death-bed. It went on to cancel this profession by a partition of the country into three spheres. The Russian sphere in the North covered more than the half of Persia, and included the whole of its more fertile and populous area with its three great towns, Teheran, Tabriz, and Ispahan. The British sphere was a small area in the south-west arid and thinly peopled, with only one large town, Kerman. Between the two stretched a great neutral area composed mainly of deserts and mountains, and the torrid region of the Gulf coast, with one large town, Shiraz. It is hard to say exactly what was intended by this partition. Neither Power explicitly claimed any political control in its own sphere. The Convention merely provided that neither Power should seek in the other's sphere for concessions of a strategic or "political" character. Despite the use of the word "political," it was stoutly denied that these zones were intended to be more than spheres of economic monopoly. In a subsequent official Correspondence the term "political" when applied to

concessions, was defined by enumeration to cover railways, roads, harbours, and telegraphs. The apologists of the Convention interpreted it as a bargain to prevent competition between the two Powers, which would have been injurious to their friendly relations, and dangerous to Persia itself. If this was all that our Foreign Office intended, it is rather for simplicity that we must criticise it, than for any conscious treason to the interests of a struggling people.

From the standpoint of British interests the Convention was an obvious, and we must suppose, a deliberate surrender. Russia was a beaten Power, with an empty Treasury, a demoralised army, and a people seething in revolt, while her footing in Persia had been lost by the victory of the Persian democracy. We proceeded to place the greater part of the country under her influence, presumably because we wished to buy her goodwill in our European rivalry with Germany. British enterprise had done much by road-building, by telegraph-construction, and by the foundation of a Bank to develop the populous North. The Convention forbade any further extension of this work. Even stronger was the fact that we obtained

no recognition from Russia of our special claims to be the predominant Power in the Gulf and along its shores, though Lord Lansdowne had gone so far as to threaten war to preserve our pretensions there. By Anglo-Indians, and notably by Lord Curzon, the Convention was criticised mainly for the danger with which it threatened our Indian defences. For generations it had been a maxim of Anglo-Indian strategists that Persia was, like Afghanistan, an indispensable buffer State against Russian aggression. Yet here was an arrangement which would shorten the route of an invader by allowing Russia to consolidate her influence as far south as Ispahan. It is true that a desert divides the Russian from the British sphere, and a desert, as Napoleon declared, is one of the best of frontiers. But one of the earliest fruits of Anglo-Russian intimacy was the approval by our Foreign Office of a Russian project to build a Trans-Persian railway which will run from Baku in the Caucasus, by way of Teheran, through Beluchistan, to Karachi and Bombay. It will, no doubt, provide a short overland route to India, but it will also make a road by which a Russian army could cross the Persian deserts and provision itself in

safety from the rear in a march on India. Were Persia strong enough to defend her neutrality the scheme would be harmless and even beneficial. But a weak Persia can furnish no such guarantee. So soon as this line is built our section will of necessity be policed and defended by Anglo-Indian troops. For the first time in our history we shall in effect confront the Russian Empire across a land frontier. No event of our time has added so wantonly to our eventual military burdens. Sir Edward Grey has staked the future of India on the eternal friendship and good faith of Russia. Ten years hence we may discover too late that our navy cannot defend a border line across the waste places of Persia.

The injury which the Convention inflicted on British interests is not yet completed, but five years have sufficed to make an end of Persian independence. The active assaults and the secret plottings against Persian liberties have come from Russia. How gross a breach of faith our weakness and subservience involves can best be realised from a glance at the professions with which we entered on our new relationship towards Persia. The Convention was signed on the last day of August, 1907.

To allay the alarm and indignation of the Persians, the British Minister, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, addressed an explanatory despatch to their Government dated September 4, 1907. It professed to speak for both Powers. They had given "a guarantee of the independence and integrity of Persia"; they will not interfere in Persian affairs, "unless some injury is inflicted on the property or persons of their subjects"; they consider that the Agreement will allow Persia henceforth to "concentrate all her energies on internal progress." It concluded with the following assurance :—

> From the above statements you will see how baseless and unfounded are these rumours which have lately prevailed in Persia concerning the political ambitions of England and Russia in this country. The object of the two Powers in making this Agreement is not in any way to attack, but rather to assure for ever the independence of Persia. Not only do they wish not to have at hand any excuse for intervention, but their object in these friendly negotiations was not to allow one another to intervene on the pretext of safeguarding their interests. The two Powers hope that in the future Persia will be for ever delivered from the fear of foreign intervention, and will thus be perfectly free

to manage her affairs in her own way, whereby advantage will accrue both to herself and to the whole world.

The Convention, as interpreted by our Minister, was more than an undertaking to respect the independence of Persia. It was a promise to prevent Russia from violating it by unwarrantable interference. The subsequent history of Persia has been one long record of infidelity to this promise.

A new Shah succeeded to the throne before the new order of things was well established. Both as heir and as Shah, Mohamed Ali had repeatedly sworn on the Koran to observe the Constitution, but from the first he surrounded himself with Persian reactionaries, and allowed great influence to his Russian tutor, Shapsal Khan. In the struggle between the Shah and the Mejliss over such questions as the fixing of the Civil List, the control of the Ministry over the army, and the right of the Shah to arrest and punish Deputies and Ministers, the sympathies of official Russia, openly expressed by the semi-official press, were with the Shah. He aimed at a sort of parody in Persia of the reaction which his patron, the Tsar, was planning against the Duma. But at first Russian backing was secret and discreet,

and more than once British influence was used if not to help, at least to protect the persons of the Nationalist leaders. One attempted *coup d'état* in the last days of 1907 failed completely. It was in June, 1908, that the Shah made his supreme effort. King Edward and the Tsar had just met at Reval and had discussed Persian affairs. The more resolute Deputies were already considering whether their liberties would ever be safe under a monarch so perfidious, and they had some thought of removing him from the throne, as the Turks afterwards removed Abdul Hamid. But already they had to realise that Persia is not like Turkey, an independent State. The Russian Minister and the British Chargé d'Affaires informed the Persian Secretary that "the Nationalists have transgressed all bounds and wish now to depose the Shah. This we cannot tolerate, and should it happen, Russia will be compelled to interfere." Such is the Persian version of this interview. The official British version reports more vaguely that the Russian Minister said, with the concurrence of our representative, that "grave consequences might ensue should anything happen to the Shah." Whatever words were used, the effect

of this threat was clear. The Persians took it to mean that they dare take no effectual action against the Shah, and they decided that a native despotism was in the last resort preferable to a foreign occupation. The Shah carried out his *coup d'état* against a resistance which was spasmodic and ineffectual, since all the more influential Nationalists had decided to yield to force. The force was applied by Colonel Liakhoff, the commander of the Russo-Persian Cossack brigade, who bombarded and destroyed the Parliament House, and acted thereafter as the dictator of Teheran, while the Shah trampled on the Constitution and slaughtered those of the leading Deputies and editors who failed to take refuge in the British Legation. A series of documents, which have been published and bear many internal marks of authenticity, suggest that this *coup d'état* was planned by Colonel Liakhoff, with the knowledge and approval of his military superiors in Russia and of the Russian Court itself. But without relying on this evidence, it is obvious that the Colonel, who was still on the Russian army list, and was in constant touch with the Russian Minister, would not have dared to take this action, if he had had

reason to suppose that it would be displeasing to the Russian Government. The Shah had triumphed in Teheran, but in Tabriz the people, under the leadership of a magnetic guerilla chief, Sattar Khan, defied the Shah, defeated his armies, and for nine months withstood a siege with heroic endurance. Rumour at length reported that Tabriz was on the point of yielding to starvation, and that the few Europeans shut up within its walls were in danger of their lives. Despite the scrupulous care which the Persians had taken to give no pretext for intervention by injuring Russian subjects—they had even refrained from firing at Colonel Liakhoff while he bombarded the Mejliss—the Russians decided to snatch at this pretext, and in April, 1909, a Russian force entered Tabriz and raised the siege. Sir Edward Grey approved this step, and pledged himself that the occupation should be temporary. From that day to this the Russian garrison has not quitted Tabriz.

The last year of Mohamed Ali's reign was a period of anarchy. He never succeeded in controlling the provinces. English efforts were used to induce him to summon a Parliament, while Russia wished to offer him a loan

in return for a financial control. Interventions steadily grew until at length there were 6,300 Russian troops in Persia, scattered in five or six strategic centres. But, encouraged by the gallantry of Tabriz, the Nationalists organised their forces and, with the aid of some volunteers from the Russian Caucasus and of the warlike Bakhtiari tribes, marched simultaneously on Teheran from the North and the South, defeated Colonel Liakhoff and his Cossacks, and deposed the Shah (July, 1909). Russia protected his person, secured a pension for him from the Persian Government, and pledged herself to take effective steps to prevent his return to Persia. A Regent was appointed, and his son, a boy of twelve, succeeded to the throne, while a new Mejliss was elected to resume the work which Colonel Liakhoff's guns had interrupted.

Throughout the next two years Persian history was comparatively uneventful, and the chief anxiety of the new Government was financial. It had to create an army and a police, but the treasury was empty. The Persian grandees, most of them reactionaries, evaded their taxes, and latterly took to enrolling themselves at the Russian

Consulates as Russian *protégés*. This device removed them from the jurisdiction of the Persian Courts and from their liability to taxation. Brigandage, fostered by the ex-Shah's partisans with a semi-political motive, was the scourge of the North, and served as a pretext for several Russian expeditions. In the South it probably had no motive but robbery. Persia must raise a loan in order to create an efficient armed force, but here her two Protectors stood in the way. They offered her a joint-loan, but demanded the right to control its expenditure, and Persia wisely refused to accept the fate of Egypt. She arranged for a non-political loan on advantageous terms with the London firm of Seligmann, but the Foreign Office interposed its veto. At length we proposed (October, 1910) that Persia should engage British officers to organise a police in the South, and threatened to send an Anglo-Indian force if she refused. Eventually, the threat was partially carried out, and a force of Indian cavalry is now stationed at Shiraz. It was apparently our ultimatum of October, 1910, which precipitated the final period of her undoing. Russia felt that the time had come to secure her own footing,

and she determined to strengthen her position by making terms with Germany. The Tsar visited Potsdam in November, and there concluded an Agreement of which all the terms are probably not yet known. She withdrew her opposition to the Bagdad Railway, and agreed to link it up with her own future Persian system. In return, Germany recognised here privileged position in Northern Persia. Secure from any German resistance, she was now free to ignore our feeble objections to her encroachments.

The first move in an active campaign by Russia against Persia was made by her old tool the ex-Shah. He left Odessa, where he was under Russian surveillance, but at Vienna, as we know from the confessions of his captured Commander-in-Chief, made in presence of the *Times* correspondent, he met the Russian Ambassador, informed him of his intention of invading Persia, and obtained from him an assurance of benevolent neutrality. He then crossed Russia "in disguise" and landed from a Russian steamer on the Persian shores of the Caspian. Russia, though she had promised to prevent his return to Persia, did nothing to check him, and the Nationalist Government was forced

to spend its scanty resources on a military campaign which ended in his defeat. (September, 1911.)

Meanwhile (May, 1911) Mr. Morgan Shuster, a brilliant American official lent by the United States Government, had arrived in Persia to reorganise its finances. He showed from the first a rare energy and strength of character, and the Mejliss trusted him so completely that it gave him almost autocratic powers. From the beginning it seemed as though Russia, fearing that he might succeed in regenerating Persia, determined first to thwart and then to remove him. The first serious conflict arose when he proposed to engage Major Stokes, a British officer who speaks Persian and knows the country well, to create a Treasury *gendarmerie* for the collection of taxes. Our Government at first gave its assent, but withdrew it in response to Russian protests. Major Stokes was not a road, a railway, or a harbour. Nothing in the Convention authorised Russia to object to his appointment. This incident led to a violent newspaper campaign, in which the semi-official Russian press heaped on "the Jew Shuster" every epithet of vilification. The crisis came in November. The Persian Government confiscated

the property of Shua-es-Sultaneh, a brother of the ex-Shah, who had joined in his invasion, and instructed Mr. Shuster to take over his house in Teheran. His gendarmes were beaten and arrested by Russian Cossacks under Russian Consular officers, and this outrage was followed by an ultimatum demanding the withdrawal of these gendarmes (who had once more occupied the house) and an abject apology. The Persian Government was clearly in the right. It hesitated to humiliate itself, and with remarkable promptitude Russian troops were landed at Resht and began to march on Teheran. Sir Edward Grey intervened, not to "prevent Russian interference," but to counsel the Persians to yield, assuring them that if they did so the Russian troops would withdraw. The Persian Government complied with our advice, but instead of withdrawing its troops, Russia presented a second ultimatum. Our own dignity, not to mention the dictates of chivalry, should have urged us to protect the suppliant who had sought and followed our advice. But in the two principal demands of this second ultimatum Sir Edward Grey actually concurred. These were (1) that Mr. Shuster should be instantly dismissed; (2) that Persia should concede

to Russia and Great Britain a veto over all future appointments of foreigners in her service ; and (3) that she should pay an indemnity to Russia. The Mejliss stood by Mr. Shuster with splendid loyalty and refused to sanction the acceptance of the Russian demands. The demands made an end of Persian independence, and the Persian people was resolved that if force prevailed, the wrong should not have its sanction. The Regent and the Ministry thereupon dissolved the Mejliss by a *coup d'état* (December 24, 1911) and accepted all the Russian demands. Even this abject surrender did not avail to bring about the withdrawal of the Russian troops. The Russian official press called for vengeance, and on Christmas Day it duly began, at Tabriz. Provoked by the behaviour of the Russian invaders a handful of volunteers had attacked them, and some fighting had followed. Tabriz has since been treated like a Russian town infected with Socialism. A field court-martial is sitting which has hanged at least twenty-six of the popular leaders. The climax of Russian brutality was the public hanging, on the most sacred day of the Persian calendar, of the principal ecclesiastic of the province. It was much as though an invader in England had

hanged the Archbishop of York on Good Friday. What precisely will result from the negotiations now in progress between London and St. Petersburg we do not yet know. Probably the Parliament will be suppressed, and, at the least, the Persian Government will be subjected to the control of " advisers " nominated by Russia and Great Britain, with Russian Cossacks and Indian cavalry behind them. Sir Edward Grey has backed Russia in demanding that the Nationalist Volunteer forces shall be disbanded. A small regular army under foreign officers is to take their place. It is the end of Persian independence.

In this way, then, was fulfilled our Minister's promise to "prevent" Russia from interfering in Persia on the pretext of safeguarding her interests. Russia has been brutal; Sir Edward Grey weak. The pledge that he joined her, in order to leave Persia " free to manage her own affairs in her own way," stands on record—a monument to shame us. We share with Russia the odium of destroying a weak people, not because it was stagnant in its decadence, but because it had begun to conquer its liberties, and to undo the corruption of centuries. We have taught the nations which thought of us as the friends of

freedom throughout the world to look on us with scorn. We have led every Moslem people as they watch our complicity in Christian brigandage in Morocco, in Persia, and in Tripoli, to inquire whether we are deliberately engaging in a conspiracy against Mohammedan liberties. We have been guilty of a treason against freedom, and in this treason our alliance with Tsardom has borne its natural fruit.

CONCLUSION

The commentary on the Anglo-Russian Understanding lies in its record. We were assured, when it was concluded, that British influence must further the growth of representative institutions and the Liberal spirit in Russia, while the co-operation of the two Powers would foster the progress and protect the independence of Persia. Both expectations have been falsified. Russia has retrograded; Persia has been partitioned and subjugated. So far from attempting to assist the Russian people in its struggle for liberty, our finance following our diplomacy has filled the war-chest of the autocracy. With each destruction of a Duma, each outrage on Finland, each assault upon Persia, the ties which

bind the two Courts and the two Foreign Offices have become the closer. The sole thought of our governing class has been to secure an ally against Germany, and to buy the support of this ally we have paid him in money, in courtesy, and in Persia's rights. Considered solely as an essay in diplomatic technique the whole episode has been, perhaps, the most inept performance in all the records of our Foreign Office. The Foreign Office has yielded step by step, never daring to set a limit to Russian audacity or to resent the most flagrant act of bad faith. Its method has invariably been to keep Russia loyal to the Triple Entente by some fresh bribe or *pourboire*—a loan at first, a slice of Persia next, a bit of broken China at the last. She has taken what it gave her, and we know of nothing which it has received in return. She made her terms with Germany at Potsdam before the close of 1910, and with that pact, as the semi-official French *Temps* frankly admitted, the Triple Entente for practical purposes ceased to exist. Not even the warmest partisan of the Russian alliance has ventured to assert that Russian diplomacy intervened on behalf of the French ally and the British friend when the crisis of the summer and autumn of 1911 had brought

us to the verge of war. We have paid, through all these years, in money, prestige and honour. We have bought nothing with our sacrifices.

There is to-day (March, 1912) a reaction in British public opinion against the game of high politics, risky at the best, and doubly dangerous when it is maladroitly played. Our bargain with France is completed; we have enabled her to seize Morocco. An attempt is at last being made to conclude a friendly understanding with Germany. No Englishman, however timid, can argue to-day that danger and necessity require us to violate our own instincts by embracing the Russian autocracy in an entente cordiale, or by sacrificing Persia to secure its friendship. There is no need to recur to the anti-Russian policy which governed our statesmanship throughout the latter half of the Nineteenth Century. But precisely because we should wish to maintain with the Russian nation, when at length it is the master of its own destinies, the most cordial and sympathetic relations, we are bound to refrain from aiding the Government which is at war with the nation. Every visit of courtesy does but enhance the prestige of that Government and condones its crimes. But, above all,

every pound of our capital which we lend to meet its exigencies, delays the time when economic necessity will force it to reform. Had we refused the loan which it sought in 1906, and the steady export of capital which followed that loan, it must long ago have capitulated to internal pressure. France was weary of lending, and Germany has no capital to spare. There is here no plea for intervention in Russian affairs. On the contrary, it is the partisans of the alliance who intervened by lending to a Government which was engaged in conducting a sort of civil war. As little is it a demand that the British Empire should go to war for the defence of Persia. The diplomatist who knows no means of securing his ends save war is incompetent to direct the affairs of a modern community. At any point in this Persian complication a sharp change of tone in the leading articles of the *Times*, a warning word in Sir Edward Grey's speeches, a sudden stoppage in the steady flow of British gold to Russian coffers, would have availed to recall Russian diplomacy to the realities of its position. It wants Persia; but Persia is a luxury. It wants money; but money is a necessity. We had only to declare that we propose to return to

conditions which prevailed between 1854 and 1906, when no Russian loan, however insignificant, was floated in the City, and our remonstrances against the intrigues and aggressions in Persia would have been received with a new respect. Russia is a great Power, but the bankers of London and Paris hold its destinies in their hands. We have rendered great services to France. Between them, Paris and London hold Russia at their mercy.

The time has come for public opinion to end this alliance of subservience and complicity. It is not by the will or the wish of the people of this country that we have been entangled in the Continental system. Above all, it is not by our will that our diplomacy with our finance as its tool has made once more a Great Power out of a staggering chaos, and watched, over its solvency and its prestige while it hanged its Socialists, imprisoned its Deputies, flogged its noblest citizens, oppressed its Jews, defiled the free soil of Finland, and erected its gallows in the cities of Persia. From such an association and from such a responsibility an honest man must turn with nausea and anger. It lies with us as electors and citizens to warn our Government that this partnership must cease.

TO THE READER.

If you wish to free yourself from responsibility for this policy, write to the Member for your Constituency and instruct him to insist that Sir Edward Grey must refrain from any entangling alliance with Russia, and observe in the spirit and in the letter his pledge to respect the independence and integrity of Persia.

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THE Anglo-Russian Committee has been formed to watch the development of Anglo-Russian relations in the interests of the liberties of the Russian people and of other races, whether outside or within the boundaries of the Empire, whose destinies may be affected by any policy which Russia and Great Britain may pursue in common.

Men and women who sympathise with these objects are invited to communicate with the Hon. Secretary.